

MASS DEPORTATIONS BY THE SOVIET UNION

The use of mass deportations of entire national and cultural entities or of certain groups within a nation has been a recognized part of Soviet policy for at least the past 16 years. Since the Soviet Union has shown a natural reluctance to publicize these acts which have resulted in the forcible uprooting of millions of people, complete information is not available. Such information as exists comes largely from refugees, themselves former deportees or in contact with deportees, or is drawn by inference from the brief announcements or significant omissions of Soviet official statements or publications. As may be expected, this information is sometimes vague, incomplete and occasionally contradictory in details. It is, however, sufficient to establish the main outlines of these events.

Examination of the reported cases of mass deportation by the Soviets from 1940 to the present suggests that such an extreme course has been taken for two reasons: as a punishment for resistance to Soviet policies or actions, or as an effort to disperse groups whose ethnic, economic or political characteristics suggest that they may furnish such opposition in the future.

A. The Poles

The first reported mass deportation is that of the Poles from eastern Poland in 1940. In an effort to liquidate every actual or potential political opponent in the newly acquired territory, the Soviets shipped an estimated 880,000 - 990,000 Poles to the northern and eastern provinces of Soviet Russia. Deportees included inhabitants of the eastern provinces and refugees from German-occupied western Poland. Men, women and children were sent by train without warning and many without possessions. Approximately 25 per cent were sentenced to labor camps; the remainder went to special migrants' settlements.

An amnesty for the Poles was signed in July 1941, after which some of the deportees were allowed to return. During the period 1939 - 1942, however, Poles constituted the largest

group of foreigners in the forced labor camps. In 1943, when diplomatic relations between the Soviet and Polish governments were broken off, deportations were resumed and continued through 1946. Many of the deportees were anti-Communist resistance fighters and "Home Army" men. In July 1946, an emigre Polish paper estimated that 110,000 Poles were still in Russian labor camps.

A recent news despatch states that "several thousand" Poles are being released and returned to Poland. It is believed that there are still several thousand Poles--deportees, prisoners of war, and criminals--left in Russia. Estimates of the total number of deportees run as high as 1.5 million.

B. The Balts: Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians

In August 1940, the Baltic states were officially incorporated into the Soviet Union. Almost immediately, plans for large-scale deportations of groups and persons termed "dangerous" by the Soviets were begun. In June 1941, upon instructions from Serov, the Deputy Commissar of the NKGB, an estimated 200,000 individuals were seized and despatched upon their long journey to forced labor camps or exile in Siberia.

Although exact figures are lacking, it appears probable that as many as 60,000 Estonians, 25,000 Latvians and an even greater number of Lithuanians were either killed or deported. Deportees included state and municipal government officials, army officers, middle class businessmen, and members of the intelligentsia. Deportations are believed to have continued after the war, particularly of Lithuanian and Latvian peasants who resisted the collectivization drives.

Recent unrest in the Baltic States has given rise to rumors that further deportations are planned. August Rei, Estonian exile leader, states that the Soviets are planning to deport 100,000 young Balts to eastern areas of the USSR for "agricultural work."

C. The Bessarabians

The seizure of the Rumanian province of Bessarabia by the Soviets in 1940 was marked by the forcible evacuation of

about 200,000 persons. Subsequent efforts to collectivize the farms in the area after the war were followed by the disappearance of a large number of peasants, presumably the victims of expropriation and exile.

D. The Volga Germans

The first Soviet ethnic minority to be uprooted and removed to distant areas of the USSR were the so-called "Volga Germans," descendants of Germans who had settled in the eighteenth century along the lower Volga. Without any proof of collective treason or any sort of trial, these people were ordered by Stalin to be moved to Novosibirsk and Omsk Oblasts, Altai Krai, and the Kazakh S.S.R., all in Siberia, on the charge of "preparing to sabotage Soviet defense efforts." The Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was abolished and its territory divided between two Oblasts. The number of people involved has never been revealed, but it is estimated that at least 400,000 were affected.

An additional 350,000 to 700,000 ethnic German Soviet citizens were moved from the Ukraine and other regions of European Russia. Some German deportees were sentenced to forced labor camps, but the majority were resettled under conditions of exile, i.e., forced residence in a specified area, restrictions on employment, and deprivation of certain rights such as party membership, voting and public office.

E. The Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachai, Balkars and Crimean Tartars

Following the retreat of the German armies from the Caucasus in 1943, Moscow decreed the deportation of six ethnic minority groups to Central Asia as punishment for collaboration with the Germans. Of these people the Chechens, a minority group in the mountains of the northern Caucasus, was the largest. Numbering about 400,000 individuals, they, together with about 90,000 Ingush, made up an autonomous republic. Both groups were forcibly resettled in 1944 in North Kazakhstan and their republic was dissolved by decree of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. At the same time the Crimean ASSR was reorganized into an Oblast, and 260,000 of its inhabitants, the Crimean Tartars, were deported to Central Asia.

Two other minority groups, the Buddhist Kalmyks, about 135,000 people inhabiting the Kalmyk ASSR, and the Karachai, about 75,000 people inhabiting the Karachai Autonomous Oblast, disappeared without explanation about the same time. The organizational units were dropped by Soviet official publications. The population was dispersed to the usual destination--Central Asia. The Balkars, a tribe of about 42,000 which had formed part of the Karbardino-Balkarian ASSR, were resettled in the Kirghiz Republic of Central Asia.

Recent reports indicate that the fate of the ethnic Soviet minorities has been ameliorated recently. Measures leading to the restoration of civil rights have been enacted and Khrushchey himself, in his speech at the Party Congress in February 1956, condemned the concept of "collective guilt" under which the Caucasian peoples had been exiled. It appears that their rehabilitation will be confined mainly to the restoration of political status and the use of their native languages rather than a return to their former homes.

F. Post War Deportations

The record of mass deportations carried out by the Soviet Union since the end of World War II leaves no doubt that the forcible resettling of whole peoples or groups is a continuing part of Soviet policy. The recent reports of the deportation of Hungarians in connection with the uprising are only the latest of the series. Mass deportations of Hungarians took place immediately after the war, when an estimated 620,000 persons, including soldiers and civilians, were affected, and again in 1950 - 1951, when approximately 70,000 members of the middle class, the aristocracy and the intelligentsia were sent by boxcar to the Soviet Union. Another example of the forced resettlement of "unreliable" elements is the removal of 30,000 persons of Greek, Turkish, and Jewish origin from the Black Sea coastal areas in 1949.